

"Making Spiritual Progress- Entering into the Hot House of Our God"

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"And the disciples came, and said to Him, Why speak You to them in parables? He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given."—Matthew 13:10-11

As we grow spiritually, we become aware that we are beginning to see and understand things that others neither see nor understand. As a result, we may become critical of those who do not see as we see, and we may even become proud when we discover that we have spiritual understanding that others do not have. If we are making genuine spiritual progress, we will experience in some measure or form these reactions.

Although this is not good, it should encourage us, as it is an indication that we are making spiritual progress and entering into a higher realm of spiritual life and understanding. **However, if we are to continue to develop spiritually, our pride and critical spirit must be dealt with and overcome.** If not, we will go no further in our spiritual development, and worse, we may begin to lose ground, spiritually.

Nailed to Our Cross

"If any man will (*choose to*) come after Me (*continue to grow spiritually*), let him deny himself and take up his (*own*) cross, and follow Me."—Matthew 16:24 (*comments added*)

Fortunately, our Lord was a carpenter, and He knows how to make crosses.

The word "*if*" tells us that this is an option that we ourselves must choose. We must give permission to our "*Carpenter*", Lord, to build this cross upon which we ourselves will hang in order to die to our pride and self-centered ways. For us to "*take up our cross*" means that the Lord has uniquely arranged a circumstance that is contrary to our desires (*crosses them*), which He has personally designed to crucify our self-life.

We must personally, specifically, make this arrangement with Jesus, otherwise, He will not build this cross. No one of us relishes a cross, nor will we appreciate the difficulties that He will arrange in order to crucify us. We can place the "*nail*" in our feet and in one of our hands, but then we are unable to place the other nail. Fortunately, there are many Christians available who will gladly place this nail for us.

Once we are upon this cross, with our hands and feet nailed, there is little that we can do to change the circumstances. None of us will appreciate these restrictions to our liberty, but we must stay there until the work is done and He has released us.

Into the Hot House

The normal habitat for a flower may be in the woods or in a garden. But if we desire to display a beautiful flower, we would go to a florist to obtain one that had been raised in a glass greenhouse. This glass "*hot house*" is a place where everything is intensified to bring forth both the beauty and the full potential of this "*flower*" (*you and I, changed into the image and likeness of Jesus*).

The Lord is bringing forth a people, especially at this present time, who are being prepared to display His end-time glory.

"When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."—2 Thessalonians 1:10

Therefore, special "*hot houses*" are available for this purpose. If we are spiritually perceptive and discerning (*our willingness to be corrected and perfected*), the Lord will arrange a set of circumstances, so we can come under the intensity of a special working of the Holy Spirit.

During the summer of 1959, I worked in a greenhouse for a short time. I filled a wheelbarrow with dirt from long flowerbeds within the greenhouse and wheeled it outside, and then replaced it with fresh dirt that had been carefully prepared for this purpose. It was over one hundred and twenty degrees within, and I would stop at the entrance and wait a few minutes to get adjusted before I entered with a fresh load of dirt. This environment was devastating to me, but the flowers flourished in it. I was told that this changing of the dirt was done each year to maintain the quality of the flowers that were produced.

Whenever I entered the greenhouse, I had only one thing in mind—to get out as quickly as possible. So also, we never seem to appreciate the dealings of the Lord, until after the flower (*fruit of the Spirit*) appears. Then, we recognize that all we had gone through was worthwhile.

Launching Out Into the Deep

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake...And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship."—Luke 5:1-3

Because the people pressed to hear, Jesus entered a ship (*our spiritual life experience*) and pushed out a little from the shore in order to teach them. This "*thrusting out*" refers to our being brought into a different atmosphere (*hot house—divine activity*), where we receive direct, personal attention from the Lord (*He entered into one of the ships*) in preparation for something greater—a "*launching out into the deep*."

"Now when He had left speaking, He said to Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."—Luke 5:4

Notice that the Lord did not stand on the shore and teach them. It is difficult for us to grasp the purpose and intensity of what Jesus was doing, when He pushed out *a little* from the shore. He moved from the normal circumstances of life (*land—where we are in control*), and entered into a new atmosphere (*water—where He is in control*), in order to prepare them. After this was done, He then said, "*launch out*"—go even further into the deeper purposes of the Lord.

"I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me *early* shall find Me. That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures."—Proverbs 8:17, 21

This word, "*early*," has a special meaning that goes beyond the thought of the "*first thing*" in the morning. I did not like wheeling dirt into the greenhouse, as it was intensely hot within. "*Early*" means that I grabbed the handles of the wheelbarrow and proceeded, because I knew the Lord had directed me, and there was a higher purpose than merely moving dirt.

Although I did not understand, I strongly felt that there was something in the *heat* of the atmosphere that would accomplish within me what the Lord desired. My part was to believe this, and then act on it. "*Early*" means that I did not waste precious time struggling with my contrary feelings.

The Lord has a particular "*hot house*" for each one of us, which will expose our need and change us according to His purpose and desire. But, we must be willing to enter therein.

Some flowers will grow almost anywhere, but when a special show-flower is needed, we purchase one grown in a greenhouse. So also, when the Lord desires to display the very best from within His Body (*Bride*), He will seek out those who either are willing to enter or have entered the "*hot house*" of His preparation, and have come forth with spiritual "*substance*."

This "*substance*" is the very life of the Lord that has been worked into our lives. Only then can we become a true "*witness*" of His life—His life being seen through our lives.

Some of us are standing at the door of our "*hot house*," hesitating to enter. May we have the courage to enter, knowing that we will become as this special "*flower*," bringing pleasure and satisfaction to our Lord.